that it may result in prices of even life saving drugs spiralling beyond the reach of common man;

(b) whether Government will lose their control over the drug industry and pricing of medicines, including life saving drugs, with the abolition of the DPCO;

(c) whether this aspect has been considered by Government; and

(d) if so; not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (d) The Drugs Prices Control Orders are issued by the Department of Chemicals and Petro-Chemicals under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to implement the Policy in so far as price controls are concerned. No decision has been taken to do away with the price control regime over drugs and pharmaceuticals. Therefore, the question of dismantling the Drugs Prices Control Order and the consequent apprehension that it may result in increase in prices of even life saving drugs does not arise.

The Drug Policy, as amended from time to time, is directed towards ensuring abundant availability of quality drugs at reasonable prices. The domestic drugs and pharmaceutical industry needs support in order to meet the challenges and to avail of the opportunities arising out of liberalization of over economy and the impending advent of the product patent regime. Government has been considering measures to lessen the regours of the present price control mechanism, where they have become counter productive. Towards this end, Government has decided to reduce the span price control.

Viewers of DD *vis-a-vis* Satellite Channels

*539. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the present estimated audience reach of viewers of Doordarshan's National and Metro Channels *vis-a-vis* the satellite channels;

(b) whether Prasar Bharati presently gives some prime-time slots on Metro Channel on annual contract basis;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the revenue earned therefrom;

(d) whether the Prasar Bharati has laid down any guidelines with regard to contracting of prime-time slots;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether some satellite channels have recently shown interest and propose to take the slots on DD Metro on long-term basis rather than on annual basis; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) Doordarshan's coverage is 75.5% area-wise, and 89.5% population-wise. Doordarshan reaches approximately 70 million households as against approximately 30 million households reached by satellite channels. The reach of DD Metro is 42% of the TV households while that of Zee and Sony are 30% and 24% respectively.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Prasar Bharati invited bids for bulk airtime sale of slots over DD-Metro for the 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. slots. M/s. Nine Network Austrialia Pvt. Ltd. were awarded the slots, for a revenue of Rs. 121 crores for 12 months.

(d) and (e) Prasar Bharati has been sourcing programmes through in-house productions, commissioning, sponsorship and on royalty. For outsourcing programmes on prime-time slots Prasar Bharati has been following its policy guidelines as amended from time to time.

(f) and (g) There have been some press reports to this effect. Prasar Bharati has not received any concrete proposal.

Proposal for merging Six Industrial Units of BYNL

†*540. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES be pleased

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.